

# LB852 Establish a mental health point of contact in schools

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LB 852 is a common sense step to ensure access to behavioral health services in communities by identifying points of contacts in each school building that have access to current listings of community behavior providers located in their geographic area that would be available to parents and students for any needed services.

Under LB852, the point of contact would be an administrator, a school nurse, a school psychologist, or another designated school employee. Each point of contact would have knowledge of local service providers and other resources in the area, which allow the point of contact to facilitate access to mental health services during the school day whenever possible.

Additionally, at the start of each school year, the Nebraska Department of Education in consultation with the DHHS Division of Behavioral Health would provide each district with a registry of state and local mental health resources available to students and families in the area. This registry would include both school and community based services.

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## Student Mental Health in Nebraska

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Mental health challenges have been steadily increasing nationwide, and Nebraska is no exception. 1 in 3 high school students reported feeling depressed in the past year, and about 1 in 5 high school students reported they seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year [1]. Worse, many of these students' mental health needs are not being met; a 2019 study by the Journal of the American Medical Association Pediatrics showed that nearly 50% of children with mental health disorders are going untreated in Nebraska [2].

Furthermore, it can often be challenging to find qualified mental health professionals to provide care. Currently, 88 of 93 counties in Nebraska are considered mental health shortage areas by the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services [3]. By creating a mental health point of contact and annually updated registry of providers, LB852 would help families better identify providers and access to care.

[1] UNMC, *Nebraska Behavioral Health Needs Assessment 2016*, <http://dhhs.ne.gov/Behavioral%20Health%20Documents/Needs%20Assessment%20-%202016.pdf>

[2] JAMA, *US National and State-Level Prevalence of Mental Health Disorders and Disparities of Mental Health Care Use in Children*, 2019 <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/2724377>

[3] Nebraska Public Media, *Nebraskans Getting Creative to Address 'Staggering' Mental Health Provider Shortage*, 2019

<https://nebraskapublicmedia.org/en/news/news-articles/nebraskans-getting-creative-to-address-staggering-mental-health-provider-shortage/>